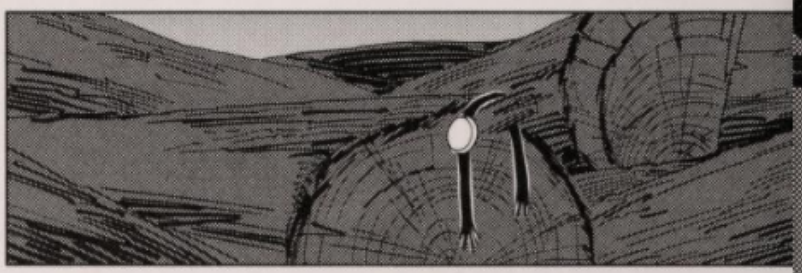
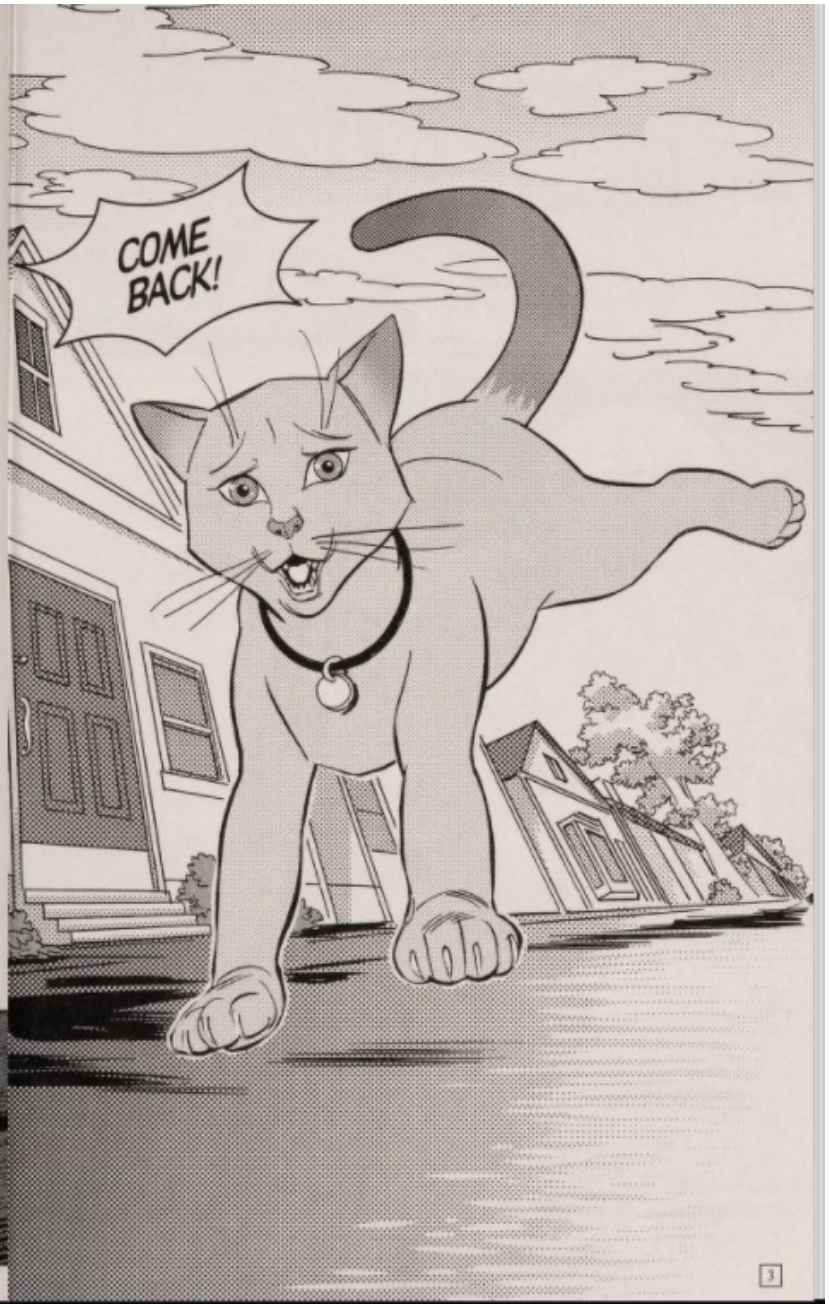
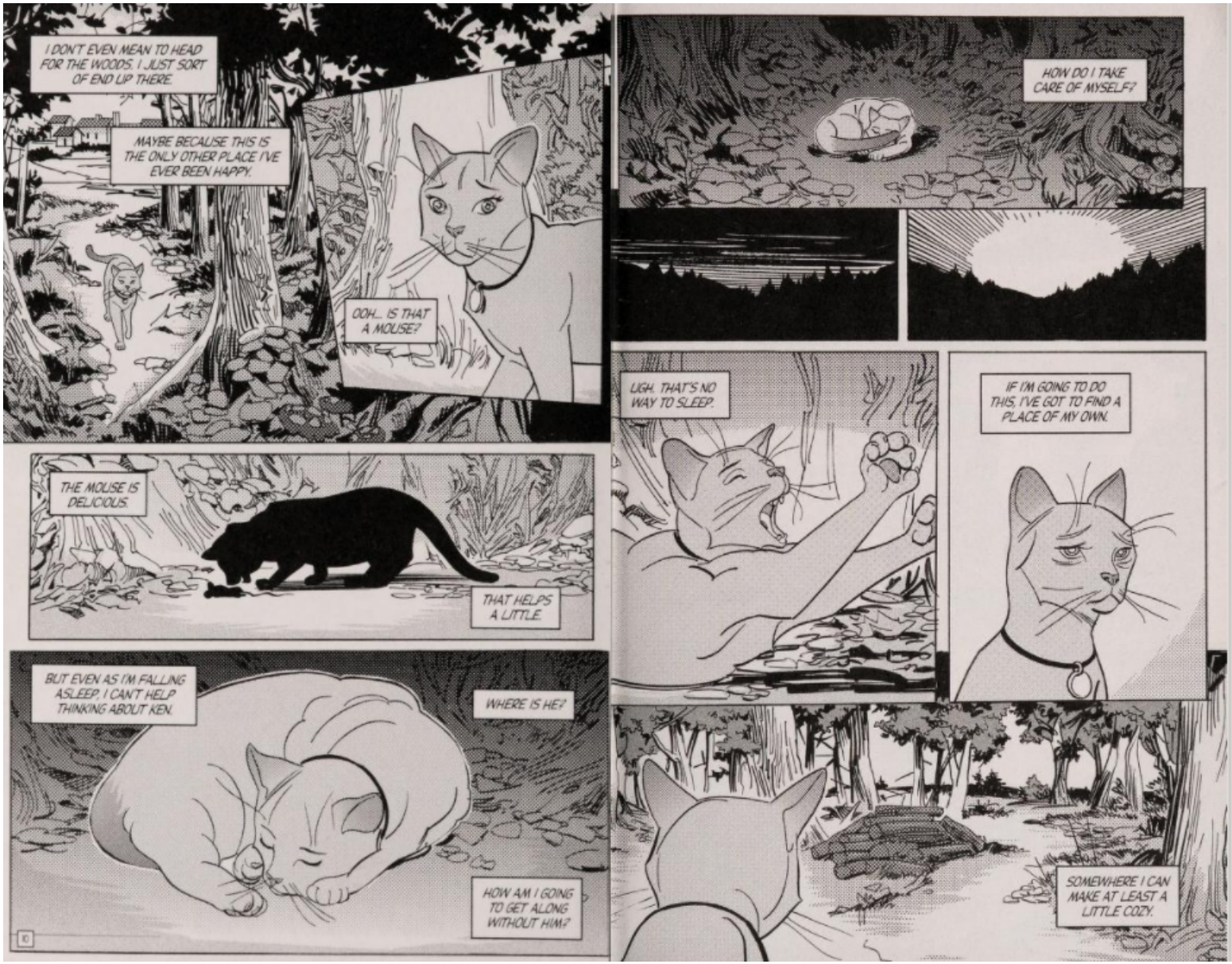



COME BACK!

DON'T LEAVE ME!
COME BACK... PLEASE...!
SO, UH... THAT'S YOUR CAT, IS IT? WITH YOU AND YOUR WIFE?
YES. WE, WE DIDN'T HAVE CHILDREN, YOU SEE.
BUT WE CAN'T KEEP PETS AT THE HOME
COME BACK.
MY NAME IS SASHA, AND I...
NO...NO!
...I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
4
5

MY WHOLE LIFE I LIVED WITH MY HOUSEFOLK.
I NEVER REALLY KNEW WHAT THEY WERE SAYING, EXACTLY... BUT I KNEW THEIR NAMES.
KEN AND JEAN.
I SPENT EVERY DAY WITH THEM...
...AND THEN EVERY NIGHT THEY LET ME OUT SO I COULD EXPLORE.
I DON'T THINK THEY KNEW ABOUT ALL THE TREES I CLIMBED...THE SQUIRRELS I HUNTED...THE FRIENDS I MADE.
THEY JUST LOVED ME, AND WANTED ME TO BE HAPPY.
6
THEN JEAN GOT SICK.
SHE GOT SO WEAK...SO FAST... AND I TRIED TO HELP, I TRIED TO COMFORT HER THE BEST I COULD. BUT NOTHING WORKED.
THEN I CAME HOME ONE DAY...
...AND SHE WAS GONE.
OH, SASHA...WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO NOW?
DAYS AND NIGHTS WENT BY, AND KEN STARTED GETTING WEAK TOO. HE STOPPED GROOMING...AND HE WOULDN'T EAT.
THEN THIS MORNING, THESE HOUSEFOLK I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE CAME AND TALKED TO HIM...
...AND HE SHUT ME INSIDE THE HOUSE, AND HE LEFT WITH THEM. HE EVEN LOCKED THE CAT DOOR! HE NEVER DOES THAT!
WHY IS HE GOING? WHEN IS HE COMING BACK?
WHY IS HE LEAVING ME BEHIND?

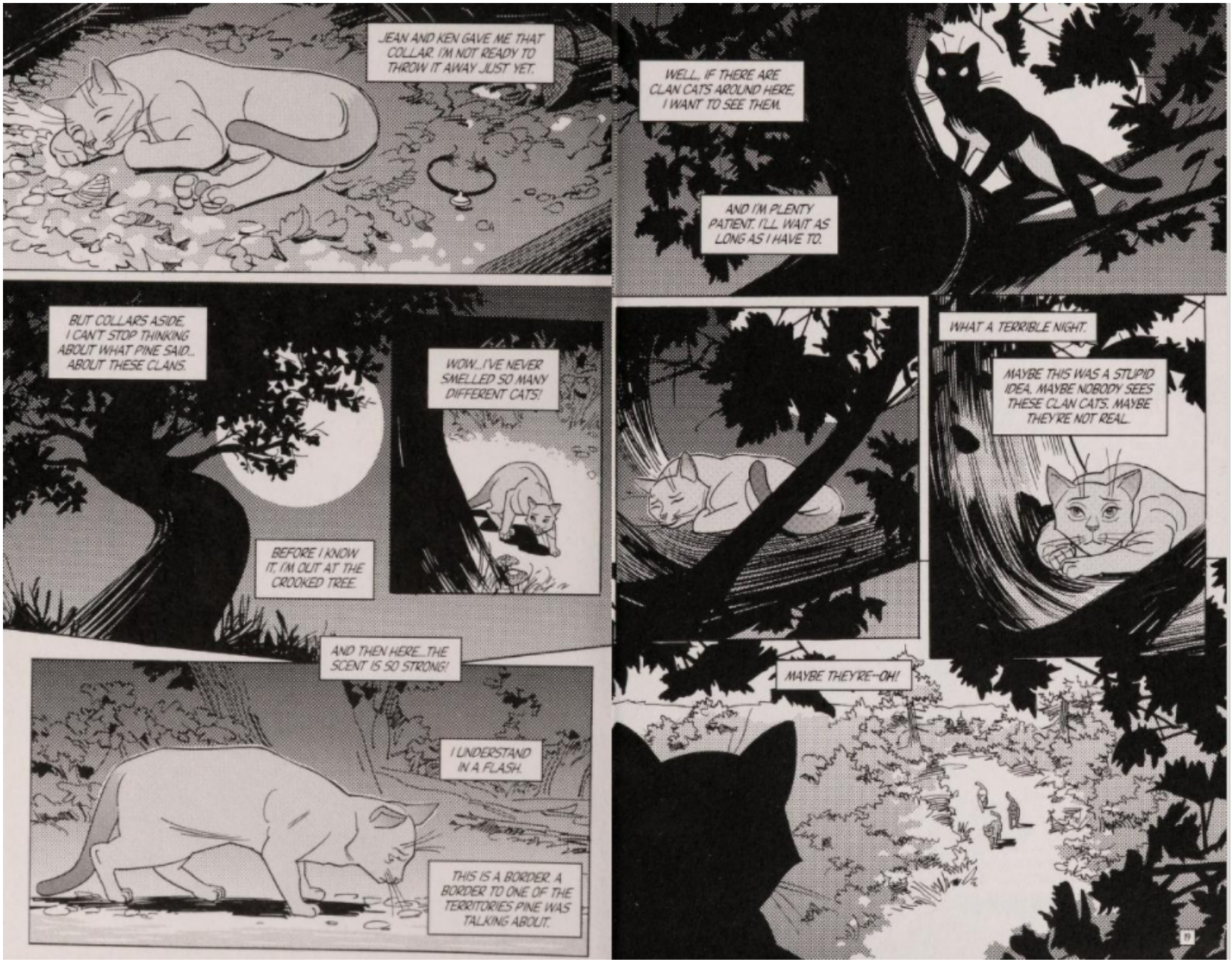
I SQUEEZED OUT A BATHROOM WINDOW AND RAN AFTER HIM, BUT I COULDN'T CATCH HIM, NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRIED.
NOW I GUESS THE ONLY THING I CAN DO IS WAIT. JUST WATCH THE HOUSE...AND WAIT TILL HE COMES BACK FOR ME.
SURELY HE'LL BE BACK SOON. SURELY HE WILL... IF I'M JUST PATIENT.
SAAASHA! SAAAAAASHA! HERE, GIRL! I'M SUPPOSED TO TAKE CARE OF YOU NOW! COME HERE, SASHA!
OH, I DO HOPE SHE'S ALL RIGHT!
TING TING
AFTER THE SUN GOES DOWN, I HEAR ONE OF THE OTHER HOUSEFOLK CALLING FOR ME. SHE WAS FRIENDS WITH KEN AND JEAN. I SHOULDN'T LEAVE, THOUGH. WHAT IF KEN COMES BACK WHEN I'M GONE?
THE NIGHT GETS COLD... AWFULLY COLD...AND IT TAKES ME TILL JUST BEFORE THE SUN RISES TO REALIZE.
KEN'S PROBABLY NOT COMING BACK.
I CAN'T GET INSIDE THE HOUSE. THE WINDOW'S CLOSED NOW, BUT... I DON'T REALLY WANT TO GET INSIDE.
BUT WHERE DO I GO NOW?
NOT IF KEN'S NOT THERE.
HI, SASHA! HOW ARE YOU TODAY?
THAT'S MY FRIEND SHNUKY, WITH ONE OF HER HOUSEFOLK.
I ALMOST WALK ON BY WITHOUT ANSWERING HER.
NOT SO GREAT, SHNUKY. MY...THE...MY LAST HOUSEFOLK IS GONE NOW.
SASHA, I'M SO SORRY!
OH! YOU KNOW WHAT YOU COULD DO? YOU COULD LIVE WITH US! MY HOUSEFOLK ALREADY LOVE YOU, Y'KNOW!
THANKS...BUT NO THANKS. I WANT MY OWN HOUSEFOLK BACK.
I'M NOT READY TO HAVE NEW ONES. I'D RATHER JUST BE ON MY OWN FOR A WHILE.
OH. O-OKAY. WELL, COME BACK AND VISIT, ALL RIGHT?
9


I DON'T EVEN MEAN TO HEAD FOR THE WOODS. I JUST SORT OF END UP THERE.
MAYBE BECAUSE THIS IS THE ONLY OTHER PLACE I'VE EVER BEEN HAPPY.
OOH... IS THAT A MOUSE?
THE MOUSE IS DELICIOUS.
THAT HELPS A LITTLE.
BUT EVEN AS I'M FALLING ASLEEP, I CAN'T HELP THINKING ABOUT KEN.
WHERE IS HE?
HOW AM I GOING TO GET ALONG WITHOUT HIM?
HOW DO I TAKE CARE OF MYSELF?
UGH. THAT'S NO WAY TO SLEEP.
IF I'M GOING TO DO THIS, I'VE GOT TO FIND A PLACE OF MY OWN.
SOMEWHERE I CAN MAKE AT LEAST A LITTLE COZY.

IT'S COLD TONIGHT. COLDER THAN LAST NIGHT.
BUT THAT'S OKAY.
THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF PREY, THAT'S FOR SURE.
MAYBE...MAYBE...STRIKING OUT ON MY OWN LIKE THIS WON'T BE SO BAD.
I'M GOING TO BE FINE.
JUST FINE.
...AND BEING NEXT TO THIS PATH, MAYBE I CAN SEE KEN.
IF HE COMES LOOKING FOR ME
IF...
PERFECT.
I CAN SLEEP HERE...
WELL, IT'S NOT EXACTLY ONE OF JEAN'S BLANKETS.
BUT IT'LL DO.

NEXT MORNING, NEXT MOUSE. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN PRETTY GOOD AT HUNTING, BUT I THINK I'M GETTING EVEN BETTER NOW.
MRR?
RAWWR!
JUST A LITTLE... BIT...FARTHER...
HSSS!
GET BACK! MY MOUSE!
OH, I'M SO SORRY! I DIDN'T REALIZE YOU WERE STALKING IT TOO!
PLEASE, FORGIVE ME, I MEANT NO HARM!
WELL...HUH.
I GUESS I COULD SHARE IT WITH YOU.
MY NAME'S PINE. WHAT'S YOURS?
I'M SASHA.
NO...I JUST GOT HERE.
I MADE MYSELF A DEN OVER NEAR THE PATH.
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU AROUND BEFORE, SASHA.
DEN? WHY WOULD YOU NEED A DEN? YOU'RE A KITTYPET!
I DON'T KNOW THIS WORD. "KITTYPET." PINE SAYS KITTYPETS LIVE IN HOUSES, WITH HOUSEFOLK. HE CALLS THEM "TWOLEGS."
I TELL HIM WHAT HAPPENED TO JEAN AND KEN. AND I TELL HIM I'M NOT A KITTYPET ANYMORE.
HE'S NOT EXACTLY WHAT YOU'D CALL SYMPATHETIC.
WELL. TIME TO MOVE ON, THEN!
YOU NEED TO GET RID OF THAT COLLAR.
MY COLLAR? WHY?
BECAUSE ONLY KITTYPETS WEAR COLLARS. IF YOU'RE GOING TO LIVE IN THE WOODS, THE COLLAR'S GOT TO GO. HERE, I'LL HELP.

I DON'T TRY TO STOP HIM.
BUT PART OF ME WISHES I HAD.
JUST HOLD STILL...ALMOST GOT IT...
THERE!
NOW YOU LOOK LIKE A ROGUE!
WHAT'S A "ROGUE"?
IT'S WHAT THE CLAN CATS CALL THOSE OF US WHO DON'T FOLLOW THEIR RULES.
I'M SORRY, I'M CONFUSED. WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "CLANS"?
GROUPS OF WILD CATS, OUT IN THE FOREST. THEY LIVE PAST THAT CROOKED TREE.
EACH CLAN HAS ITS OWN SECTION OF THE WOODS, AND ONLY THEY CAN HUNT THERE. THEY'LL FIGHT ANYBODY TO KEEP 'EM OUT.
CLAN CATS ARE FIERCE. LET ME TELL YOU. SEE THESE SCARS? I KNOW FIRSTHAND HOW FIERCE THEY ARE.
YOU BE CAREFUL OF THE CLANS, SASHA.
THEY DON'T THINK MUCH OF KITTYPETS.


JEAN AND KEN GAVE ME THAT COLLAR. I'M NOT READY TO THROW IT AWAY JUST YET.
WELL.. IF THERE ARE CLAN CATS AROUND HERE, I WANT TO SEE THEM.
AND I'M PLENTY PATIENT. I'LL WAIT AS LONG AS I HAVE TO.
BUT COLLARS ASIDE, I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT WHAT PINE SAID.. ABOUT THESE CLANS.
WOW...I'VE NEVER SMELLED SO MANY DIFFERENT CATS!
BEFORE I KNOW IT, I'M OUT AT THE CROOKED TREE.
WHAT A TERRIBLE NIGHT.
MAYBE THIS WAS A STUPID IDEA. MAYBE NOBODY SEES THESE CLAN CATS. MAYBE THEY'RE NOT REAL..
AND THEN HERE...THE SCENT IS SO STRONG!
I UNDERSTAND IN A FLASH.
THIS IS A BORDER. A BORDER TO ONE OF THE TERRITORIES PINE WAS TALKING ABOUT.
MAYBE THEY'RE--OH!
19

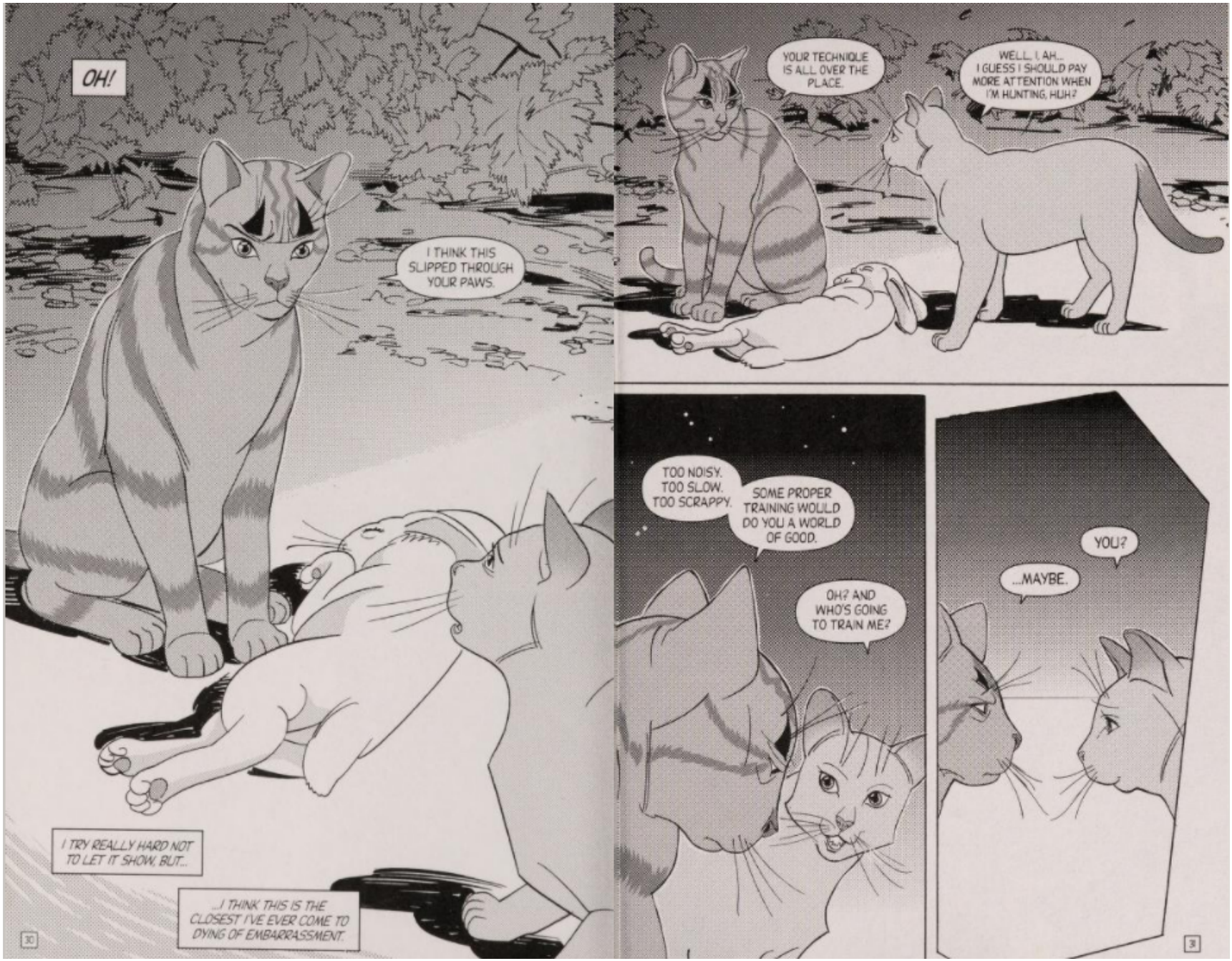
MAYBE I'LL JUST SIT RIGHT HERE AND BE QUIET NOW...
I WATCH AS THEY MARK THEIR BORDER.
ROWANPAW.
WHAT OTHER SCENTS CAN YOU PICK UP, APPRENTICE?
THEN THE BIG, HANDSOME ONE STARTS TALKING.
SCENTS...SCENTS! OH NO. WHAT IF THEY CAN SMELL ME?!
IT'S FOX. TIGERSTAR. IT'S FOX!
THE HANDSOME CAT IS CALLED TIGERSTAR? HOW DRAMATIC!
VERY GOOD. THE SCENT IS FAINT, WASHED MOSTLY AWAY BY A LIGHT RAIN. YET ROWANPAW DETECTED IT EASILY.
YOU'VE TAUGHT YOUR APPRENTICE WELL, JAGGED-TOOTH.
THANK YOU, TIGERSTAR.
CONTINUE THE PATROL.
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THIS BIG, STRONG CAT...
THE FOX IS NO THREAT TO US.
AS YOU WISH.
I JUST CAN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF HIM!
21

THESE CLAN CATS...THEY MIGHT LIVE IN THE FOREST, AND FIGHT TO SURVIVE...BUT AT LEAST THEY HAVE EACH OTHER.
I'M ENVIOUS. WHO DO I HAVE? NO ONE, THAT'S WHO. I--
--DOES HE...IS HE LOOKING AT ME?
NO...NO. THEY'RE GOING. WHAT AM I THINKING?
IF I CAN'T HAVE JEAN AND KEN BACK, I'D RATHER BE ALONE. I DON'T NEED NEW FRIENDS. NOT PINE. NOT TIGERSTAR.
NOT ANYONE.
ALL THROUGH THE NEXT DAY I TELL MYSELF THAT. OVER AND OVER.
I FIGURE I CAN CONVINCE MYSELF, AND THEN I WON'T BE CURIOUS ANYMORE.
I SHOULD'VE KNOWN BETTER.
OOOH, THERE HE IS!
I SMELL IT AGAIN!
I DO TOO. FRESH...BUT FAINT.
I DON'T THINK WE HAVE TO WORRY. THIS FOX IS LIVING BEYOND OUR BORDERS.
23

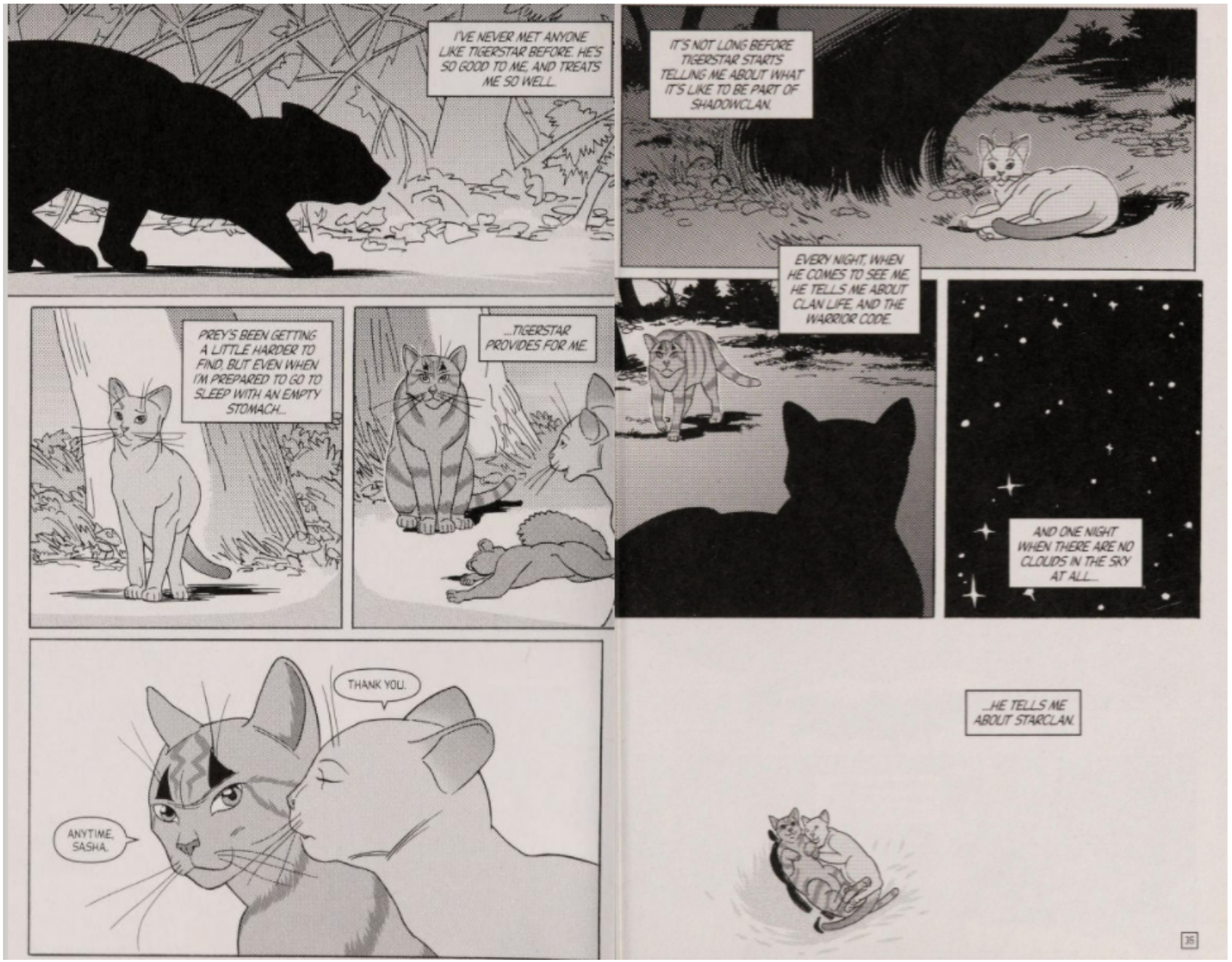
LISTEN! PREY. THERE.
YES!
ROWANPAW, FOLLOW.
LOW TO THE GROUND, BUT NOT TOO LOW.
YOU WANT YOUR WEIGHT DISTRIBUTED EVENLY, BUT YOU DON'T WANT TO CAUSE LEAVES TO RUSTLE.
RIGHT, OKAY.
RRHARH!
WOW! THAT'S A FAST ONE!
I DON'T KNOW IF THIS IS A GOOD IDEA OR NOT.
HEH HEH...
WE'VE GOT TO--
KRNCH
THEY DON'T SEEM TO KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF ME.
HUH? OH... RIGHT, FROGS ARE...UH...
...NASTY.
AND YET PREY IS PREY, DISTASTEFUL OR NOT. ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
UM. YES! ABSOLUTELY.
WAIT.. sniff sniff
ECCH. IT'S FROG.
24

BUT THE LOOK ON THE BIG, HANDSOME CAT'S FACE IS PRICELESS.
GO ON. TAKE THIS FRESH-KILL WE'VE BEEN SO GENEROUSLY OFFERED.
I'LL CATCH UP WITH YOU.
GHRRRHH!
RRHAOWRRH!
RELAX, YOU TWO.
SHE'S NO THREAT.
YOU WERE HERE YESTERDAY, WEREN'T YOU? I RECOGNIZE YOUR SCENT.
YES, I WAS HERE.
I THINK THIS SLIPPED THROUGH YOUR PAWS...?
DO YOU KNOW THIS IS THE BORDER OF SHADOWCLAN TERRITORY? YOU MUST NOT CROSS IT, OR STEAL OUR PREY.
OTHERWISE, NEXT TIME I'LL LET MY WARRIORS RIP YOUR FUR.
I JUST MET THIS CAT. I DON'T KNOW HIM, BUT SOMETHING ABOUT HIM CONVINCES ME...
...HE DOESN'T REALLY MEAN THOSE FIERCE WORDS.
YOU CAN KEEP YOUR FROGS. AND ANYWAY, WHO NEEDS BORDERS?
THERE'S PLENTY OF PREY IN THE FOREST.
26

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. THERE ARE FOUR CLANS. WE HAVE TO FIGHT TO SURVIVE.
MY ENEMIES WOULD DO ANYTHING TO TAKE MY TERRITORY AWAY FROM ME.
REALLY?
WHAT DID YOU DO, TO MAKE SO MANY ENEMIES?
YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW.
WELL, GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR HUNTING.
LISTEN...IF YOU MEET ONE OF MY BORDER PATROLS, BE CAREFUL. ASK FOR TIGERSTAR IF THEY GIVE YOU ANY TROUBLE.
TIGERSTAR? OKAY.
AND WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
SASHA.
28
TIGERSTAR.
THE WHOLE NIGHT, AND ALL THE NEXT DAY, HE KEEPS POPPING INTO MY THOUGHTS.
THE WAY HE LOOKS...SO BIG, AND MUSCULAR, WITH THOSE FEROCIOUS CLAWS.
HIS SCENT. I THINK I'D KNOW IT ANYWHERE NOW.
AND HIS VOICE. SO CONFIDENT AND INTELLIGENT AND--
-RRH?


OH!
I THINK THIS SLIPPED THROUGH YOUR PAWS.
I TRY REALLY HARD NOT TO LET IT SHOW, BUT...
...I THINK THIS IS THE CLOSEST I'VE EVER COME TO DYING OF EMBARRASSMENT.
30
YOUR TECHNIQUE IS ALL OVER THE PLACE.
WELL, I, AH... I GUESS I SHOULD PAY MORE ATTENTION WHEN I'M HUNTING, HUH?
TOO NOISY. TOO SLOW. TOO SCRAPPY.
SOME PROPER TRAINING WOULD DO YOU A WORLD OF GOOD.
OH? AND WHO'S GOING TO TRAIN ME?
YOU?
...MAYBE.
31

WHERE DO YOU LIVE?
PINE'S WORDS COME BACK TO ME, ABOUT CLAN CATS NOT LIKING KITTYPETS. I'D BETTER BE CAREFUL.
I HAVE A DEN, BESIDE THE NARROW TWOLEG PATH.
I'M PROBABLY NOT STAYING LONG.
I UNDERSTAND.
...MAY I SEE YOU AGAIN?
AND THAT'S WHERE IT BEGAN. WE MET AGAIN THE NEXT NIGHT...
...AND THE NEXT...
...AND THE NEXT.
NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, JUST THE TWO OF US. TIGERSTAR IS SO POLITE, AND STRONG, AND...
...HE MAKES ME FEEL SO SAFE. I LOVE THAT.
DO I--AM I--AM I FALLING IN LOVE WITH HIM? IS THAT WHAT THIS FEELING IS, IN MY HEART?

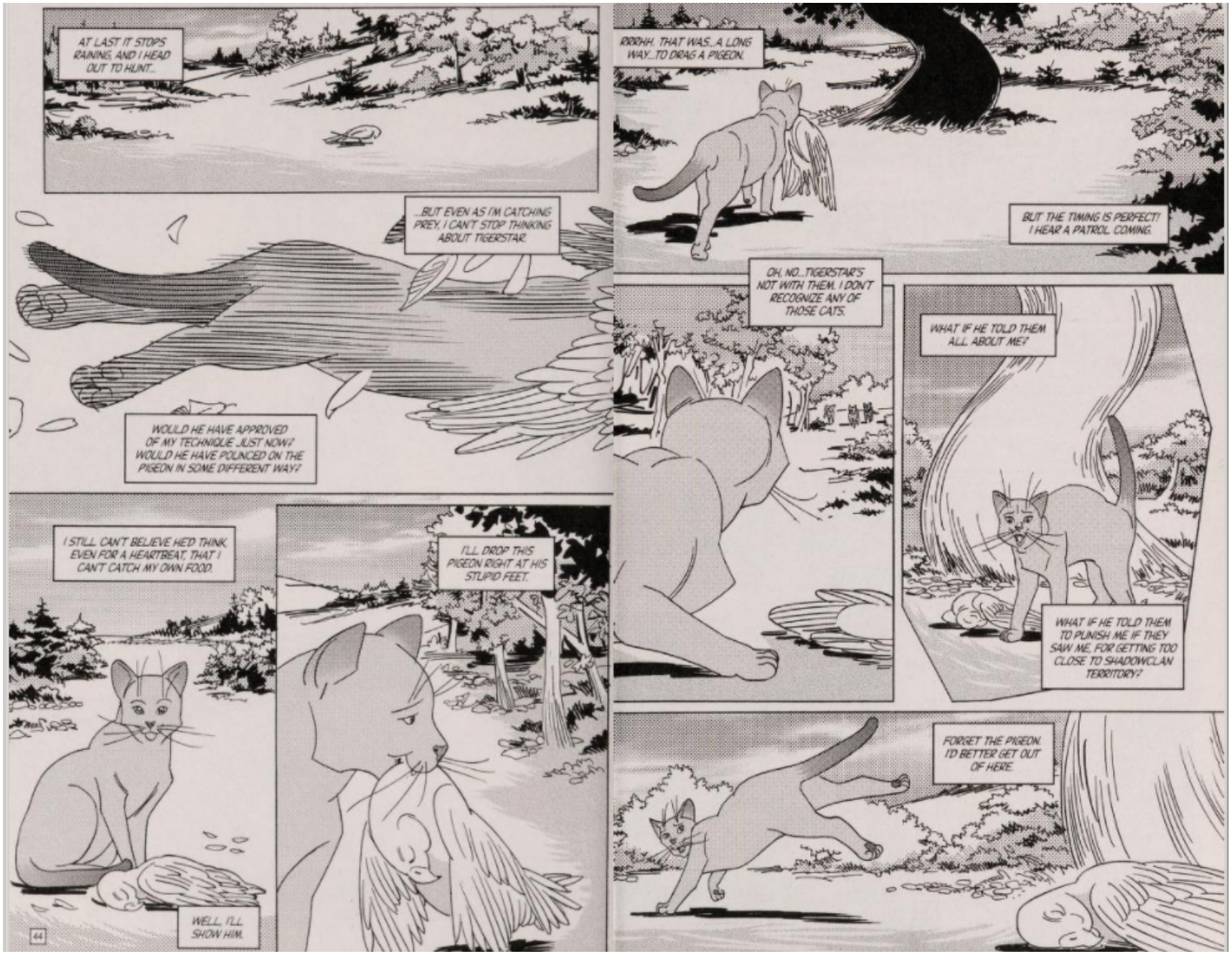

I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE LIKE TIGERSTAR BEFORE. HE'S SO GOOD TO ME, AND TREATS ME SO WELL.
IT'S NOT LONG BEFORE TIGERSTAR STARTS TELLING ME ABOUT WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE PART OF SHADOWCLAN.
EVERY NIGHT, WHEN HE COMES TO SEE ME, HE TELLS ME ABOUT CLAN LIFE, AND THE WARRIOR CODE.
PREY'S BEEN GETTING A LITTLE HARDER TO FIND, BUT EVEN WHEN I'M PREPARED TO GO TO SLEEP WITH AN EMPTY STOMACH...
...TIGERSTAR PROVIDES FOR ME.
AND ONE NIGHT WHEN THERE ARE NO CLOUDS IN THE SKY AT ALL...
THANK YOU.
ANYTIME, SASHA.
...HE TELLS ME ABOUT STARCLAN.

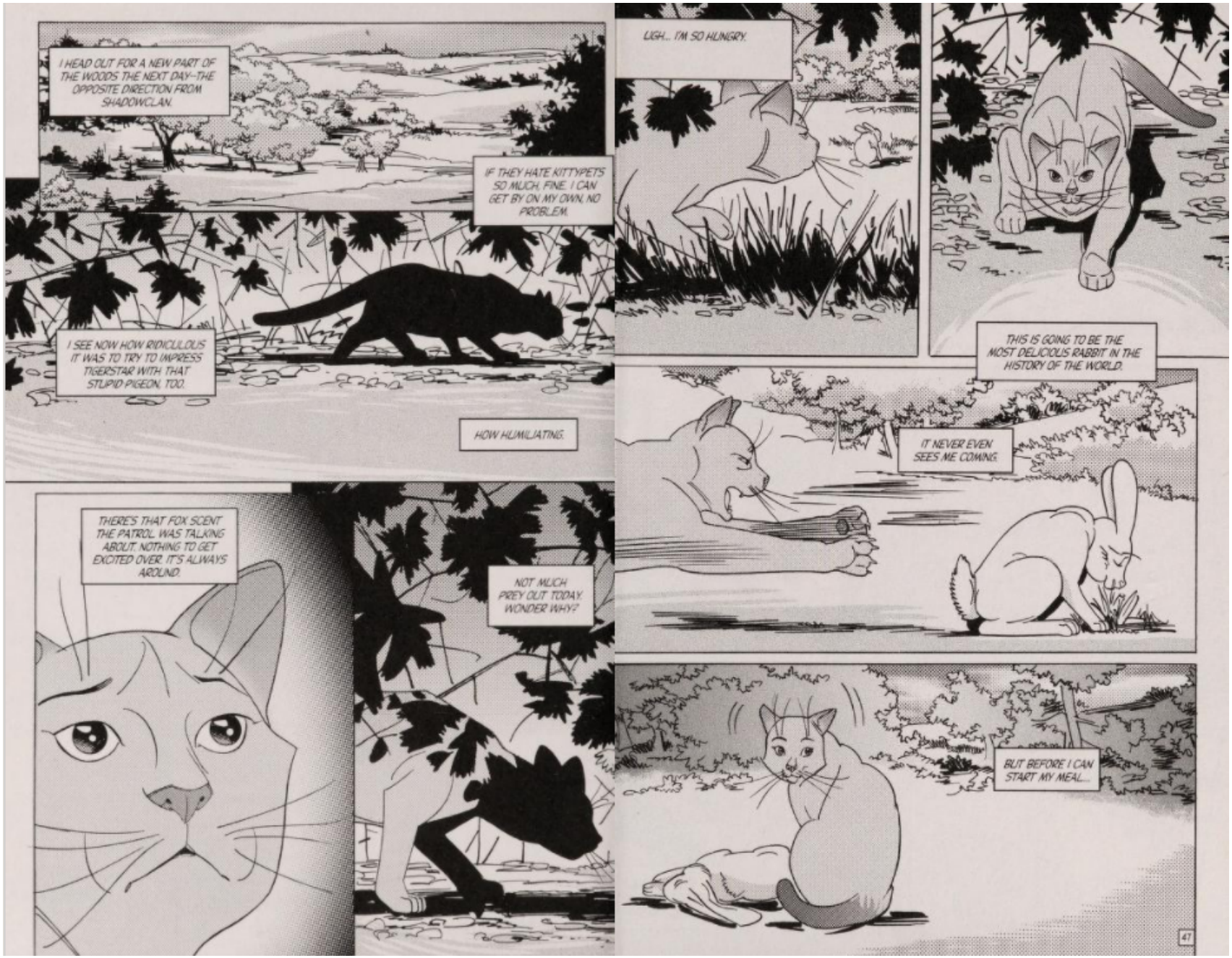
THEN ONE NIGHT, WHEN WE'RE WALKING BACK TO THE CROOKED TREE, A FOX COMES OUT OF NOWHERE.
BUT TIGERSTAR GROWLS AND UNSHEATHES HIS CLAWS, AND JUST CHARGES STRAIGHT AT THE FOX!
I'M READY TO RUN FOR MY LIFE.
I'M NOT ASHAMED TO SAY IT. NOT ONLY DID HE SAVE MY LIFE...
...BUT I SWEAR, HE'S THE BRAVEST CAT I'VE EVER SEEN.
HE EVEN GIVES IT A WARNING SCRATCH FOR GOOD MEASURE!
I NEVER THOUGHT IT COULD HAPPEN, BUT I'M STARTING TO THINK I COULD BE HAPPY HERE. HERE...WITH TIGERSTAR.
WHERE IS HE, ANYWAY?
I HOPE HE'S OKAY. IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO HIM...WELL... I DON'T WANT TO THINK ABOUT IT.
GUESS I'LL JUST GET SOMETHING TO EAT AND HEAD HOME.
EVENING, SASHA.
THERE YOU ARE!
WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE WERE YOU?
I WAS WORRIED SICK!

NICE PLACE. I SHOULD'VE COME HERE EARLIER.
QUIET. PEACEFUL.
SO TELL ME...
...WHEN WILL YOU BE GOING BACK TO YOUR TWOLEGS?
YOU'RE A KITTYPET.
I THOUGHT I WAS A ROGUE!
IT ALL COMES CRASHING DOWN IN A SINGLE HEARTBEAT. HE KNOWS!
BURY THIS... THIS THING. RIGHT NOW.
TREAT IT LIKE DIRT. LIKE THE FILTH IT IS.
I SHOULD'VE TOLD HIM THE TRUTH FROM THE START.
BUT HOW COULD I BURY THAT COLLAR WHEN KEN AND JEAN GAVE IT TO ME?
WELL...WELL. WHAT GIVES YOU THE RIGHT TO GO SNOOPING IN MY DEN, ANYWAY? HUH?
IT'S NOT FILTH. THAT COLLAR IS TOO IMPORTANT TO ME TO JUST GET RID OF IT.
AND WHAT'S SO WRONG WITH BEING A KITTYPET, ANYWAY?
39

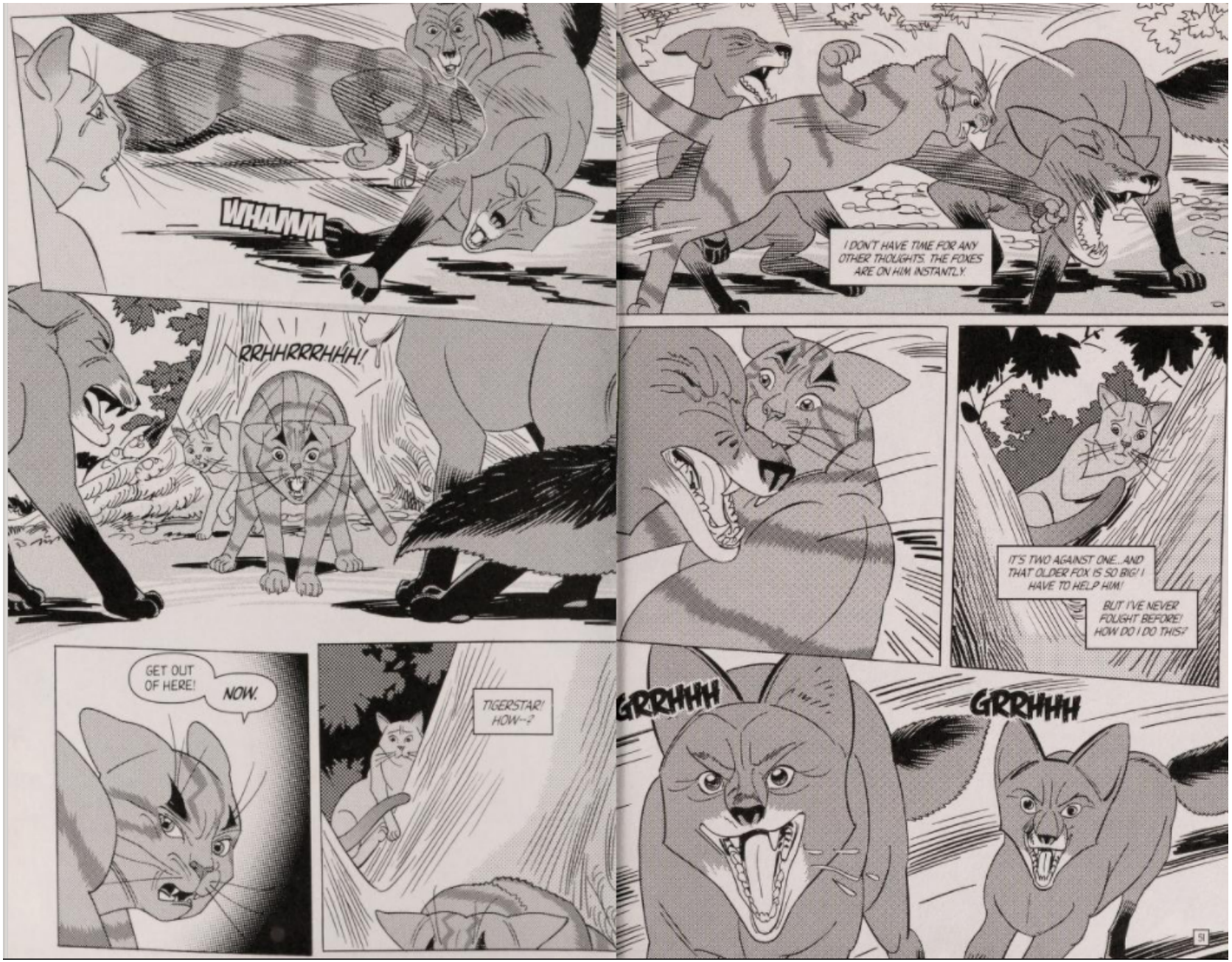
A KITTYPET EATS MUSH INSTEAD OF FRESH-KILL, AND SLEEPS IN TWOLEG NESTS BECAUSE THEY'RE TOO SCARED TO LIVE UNDER THE TREES AND THE OPEN SKY.
A KITTYPET DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT THE WARRIOR CODE, OR WHAT IT MEANS TO FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL, TO PROTECT A CLAN LIKE A MOTHER PROTECTING HER KITS.
A KITTYPET CAN'T FEED HERSELF.
HEY!
IT STARTED RAINING THE MORNING AFTER TIGERSTAR AND I FOUGHT.
IT HASN'T STOPPED FOR DAYS.
WELL, IF I'M SO OFFENSIVE, WHY ARE YOU EVEN STILL STANDING HERE, TALKING TO ME?
YOU'RE RIGHT.
I CAN'T STAY HERE.
PREY'S GETTING SCARCER. MY STOMACH WON'T STOP GROWLING.
WITH ALL THIS TIME TO THINK, I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER...
NO CAT WOULD BELIEVE IT IF THEY THOUGHT I WAS TALKING TO A KITTYPET.
MAYBE TIGERSTAR'S RIGHT.
MAYBE I AM A KITTYPET AT HEART.
40

WHO'S A GOOD KITTY KITTUMS? WHO IS IT? IS SASHA THE GOOD KITTY KITTUMS?
WHAT A GOOD LITTLE GIRL!
I THINK I'LL GET HER SOME MORE TOYS TOMORROW
"FROM RUNNING AROUND AT NIGHT, I'LL BET."
"WHO KNOWS WHAT MISCHIEF SHE GETS INTO OUT THERE?"
MRRROW?
FINALLY I REALIZE: I CAN'T BE ASHAMED OF MY LIFE WITH KEN AND JEAN.
I WAS WELL CARED FOR THERE. WELL FED. I WAS LOVED. AND NOW...NOW I'M TAKING CARE OF MYSELF.
TIGERSTAR DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT. ...STUPID FURBALL.
EVERYBODY SAY "CHEESE!"
SHE'S GOT A GOOD APPETITE
42

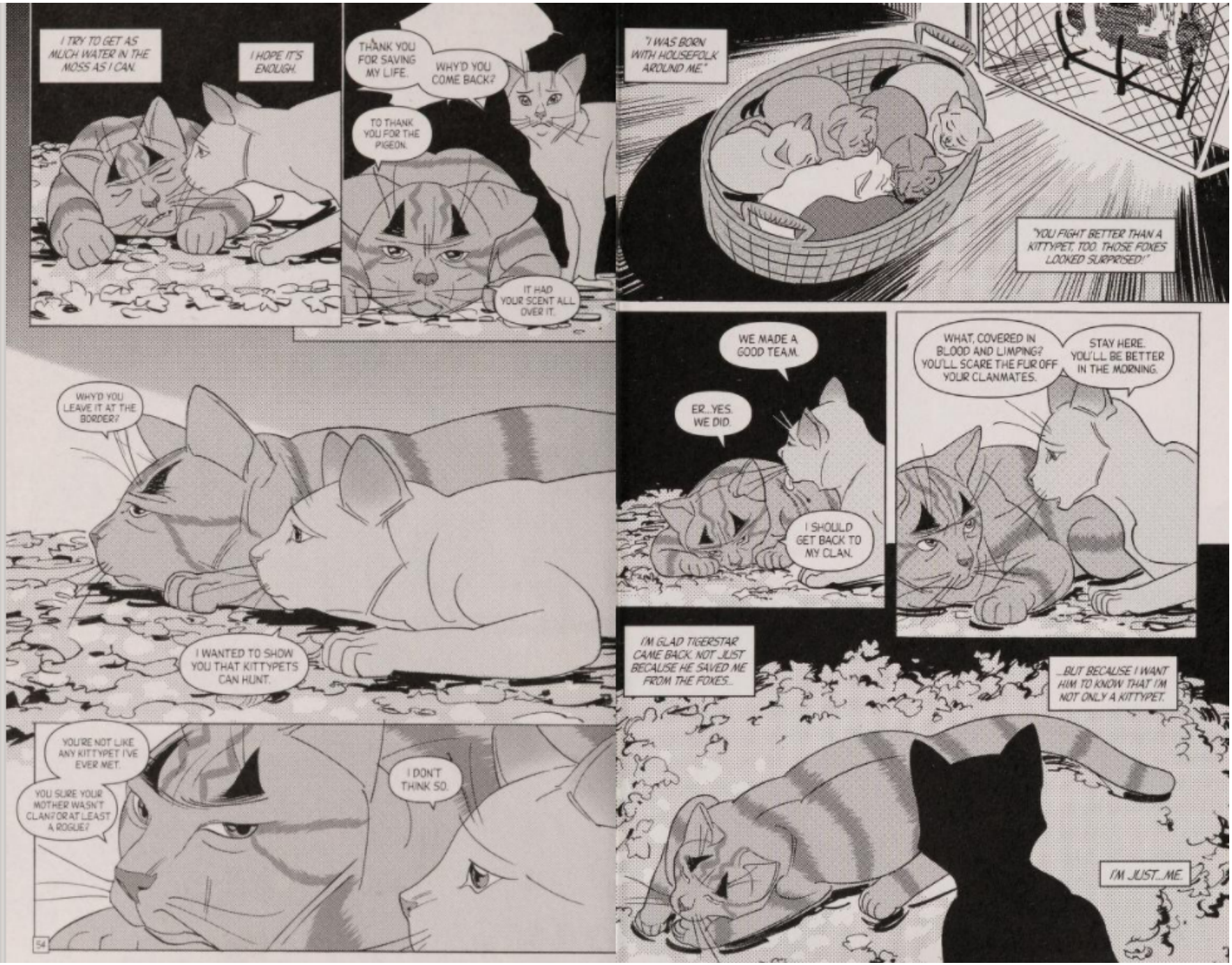

AT LAST IT STOPS RAINING, AND I HEAD OUT TO HUNT...
...BUT EVEN AS I'M CATCHING PREY, I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT TIGERSTAR.
WOULD HE HAVE APPROVED OF MY TECHNIQUE JUST NOW? WOULD HE HAVE POUNCED ON THE PIGEON IN SOME DIFFERENT WAY?
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE HE'D THINK, EVEN FOR A HEARTBEAT, THAT I CAN'T CATCH MY OWN FOOD.
I'LL DROP THIS PIGEON RIGHT AT HIS STUPID FEET.
WELL, I'LL SHOW HIM.
44
RRRHH. THAT WAS...A LONG WAY...TO DRAG A PIGEON.
BUT THE TIMING IS PERFECT! I HEAR A PATROL COMING.
OH, NO...TIGERSTAR'S NOT WITH THEM. I DON'T RECOGNIZE ANY OF THOSE CATS.
WHAT IF HE TOLD THEM ALL ABOUT ME?
WHAT IF HE TOLD THEM TO PUNISH ME IF THEY SAW ME, FOR GETTING TOO CLOSE TO SHADOWCLAN TERRITORY?
FORGET THE PIGEON. I'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE.


I HEAD OUT FOR A NEW PART OF THE WOODS THE NEXT DAY--THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION FROM SHADOWCLAN.
IF THEY HATE KITTYPETS SO MUCH, FINE. I CAN GET BY ON MY OWN. NO PROBLEM.
I SEE NOW HOW RIDICULOUS IT WAS TO TRY TO IMPRESS TIGERSTAR WITH THAT STUPID PIGEON, TOO.
HOW HUMILIATING.
UGH... I'M SO HUNGRY.
THIS IS GOING TO BE THE MOST DELICIOUS RABBIT IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD.
IT NEVER EVEN SEES ME COMING.
BUT BEFORE I CAN START MY MEAL...
THERE'S THAT FOX SCENT THE PATROL WAS TALKING ABOUT. NOTHING TO GET EXCITED OVER. IT'S ALWAYS AROUND.
NOT MUCH PREY OUT TODAY. WONDER WHY?
47

...IT FEELS LIKE ALL MY BLOOD JUST FREEZES SOLID INSIDE ME.
THIS IS MY KILL! MINE! YOU...
...YOU JUST GO FIND YOUR OWN! GO ON, NOW! GO!
RUN RUN RUN GOTTA RUN GOTTA RUN FAST!
CAN'T LET THEM CATCH ME IF THEY CATCH ME THEY'LL EAT ME...
RUN RUN RUN GO GO GO!!
NO!
NO TIME TO CLIMB THE TREE...
...AND IF I TURN MY BACK ON THEM NOW, THEY'LL HAVE ME IN THEIR JAWS BEFORE I CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.
WHAT DO I DO? WHAT DO I DO?
48


WHAMM
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR ANY OTHER THOUGHTS. THE FOXES ARE ON HIM INSTANTLY.
RRHHRRRHHH!
IT'S TWO AGAINST ONE...AND THAT OLDER FOX IS SO BIG! I HAVE TO HELP HIM!
BUT I'VE NEVER FOUGHT BEFORE! HOW DO I DO THIS?
GET OUT OF HERE!
NOW.
TIGERSTAR! HOW--?
GRRHHH
GRRHHH

RRAAOWRRH!
SASHA, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SHUT UP AND FIGHT!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS... SEEING TIGERSTAR IN DANGER-- OR MAYBE KNOWING HE'D SAVED MY LIFE AGAIN.
BUT SOMETHING JUST TAKES OVER.
AND BEFORE I KNOW IT...
...THE FIGHT'S DONE.
TIGERSTAR! YOU'RE BLEEDING--ARE YOU HURT BAD?
I JUST...NEED TO REST...
COME ON. LEAN ON ME.
"I'LL GET YOU SOMEWHERE SAFE."


I TRY TO GET AS MUCH WATER IN THE MOSS AS I CAN.
I HOPE IT'S ENOUGH.
THANK YOU FOR SAVING MY LIFE.
WHY'D YOU COME BACK?
TO THANK YOU FOR THE PIGEON.
IT HAD YOUR SCENT ALL OVER IT.
"I WAS BORN WITH HOUSEFOLK AROUND ME."
"YOU FIGHT BETTER THAN A KITTYPET, TOO. THOSE FOXES LOOKED SURPRISED!"
WHY'D YOU LEAVE IT AT THE BORDER?
I WANTED TO SHOW YOU THAT KITTYPETS CAN HUNT.
WE MADE A GOOD TEAM.
ER...YES. WE DID.
I SHOULD GET BACK TO MY CLAN.
WHAT, COVERED IN BLOOD AND LIMPING? YOU'LL SCARE THE FUR OFF YOUR CLANMATES.
STAY HERE. YOU'LL BE BETTER IN THE MORNING.
YOU'RE NOT LIKE ANY KITTYPET I'VE EVER MET.
YOU SURE YOUR MOTHER WASN'T CLAN? OR AT LEAST A ROGUE?
I DON'T THINK SO.
I'M GLAD TIGERSTAR CAME BACK. NOT JUST BECAUSE HE SAVED ME FROM THE FOXES...
...BUT BECAUSE I WANT HIM TO KNOW THAT I'M NOT ONLY A KITTYPET.
I'M JUST...ME.
54

I HAVE TO GET BACK TO THE CAMP NOW.
THANK YOU AGAIN FOR HELPING ME.
I'LL BE PATROLLING TONIGHT.
CAN I SEE YOU AGAIN?
WHAT, EVEN THOUGH I'M A KITTYPET?
YOU'RE NOT. NOT REALLY. YOU'RE A... ROGUE.
IF YOU EVER GET CAUGHT BY A CLAN CAT, YOU MUST TELL THEM THAT. PROMISE?
WHY DO YOU HAVE TO GIVE EVERY CAT A NAME? WHY CAN'T WE JUST ALL BE CATS?
56
BECAUSE IT DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY.
IF YOU WERE BORN IN THE FOREST, YOU'D UNDERSTAND.
I THINK ABOUT WHAT TIGERSTAR SAID ALL DAY. CLANS...ROGUES...KITTYPETS.
I DON'T SEE WHY WE CAN'T ALL JUST LIVE AND LET LIVE.
CONFUSED OR NOT, THOUGH, I HAVE MORE RESPECT FOR CLAN CATS NOW.
I CAN'T SEE SHIVERY EVER TAKING ON ONE FOX, NEVER MIND TWO.
TIGERSTAR...?
HERE.

YOU LOOK... WELL.
"WELL"?
A CAT COULD ALMOST TAKE THAT AS A COMPLIMENT.
COME ON. I WANT TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING.
OH? WHERE
YOU'LL SEE.
OKAY, SEE THAT? THAT'S THE HOUSE I GREW UP IN--WHERE I LIVED WITH MY HOUSEFOLK.
AND THAT'S THE FIRST TREE I CLIMBED, AND I CAUGHT MY FIRST BIRD AT THAT BIRDBATH, AND...
...HEY, ARE YOU-- YOU'RE NOT PAYING ATTENTION AT ALL!
CAN'T YOU AT LEAST PRETEND TO BE INTERESTED? THIS PLACE IS IMPORTANT TO ME!
WHAT IS THIS?
IT'S A FENCE, SILLY! THERE'S NO TELLING HOW MANY HOURS I'VE SPENT SITTING ON TOP OF IT, JUST WATCHING THE WORLD.
COME ON UP. IT'S AN EASY JUMP.
IT SHOULDN'T BE. NOT ANYMORE.
NOT IF YOU WANT TO LIVE IN THE FOREST.
AND IF YOU DO...YOU CAN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH TWOLEGS.

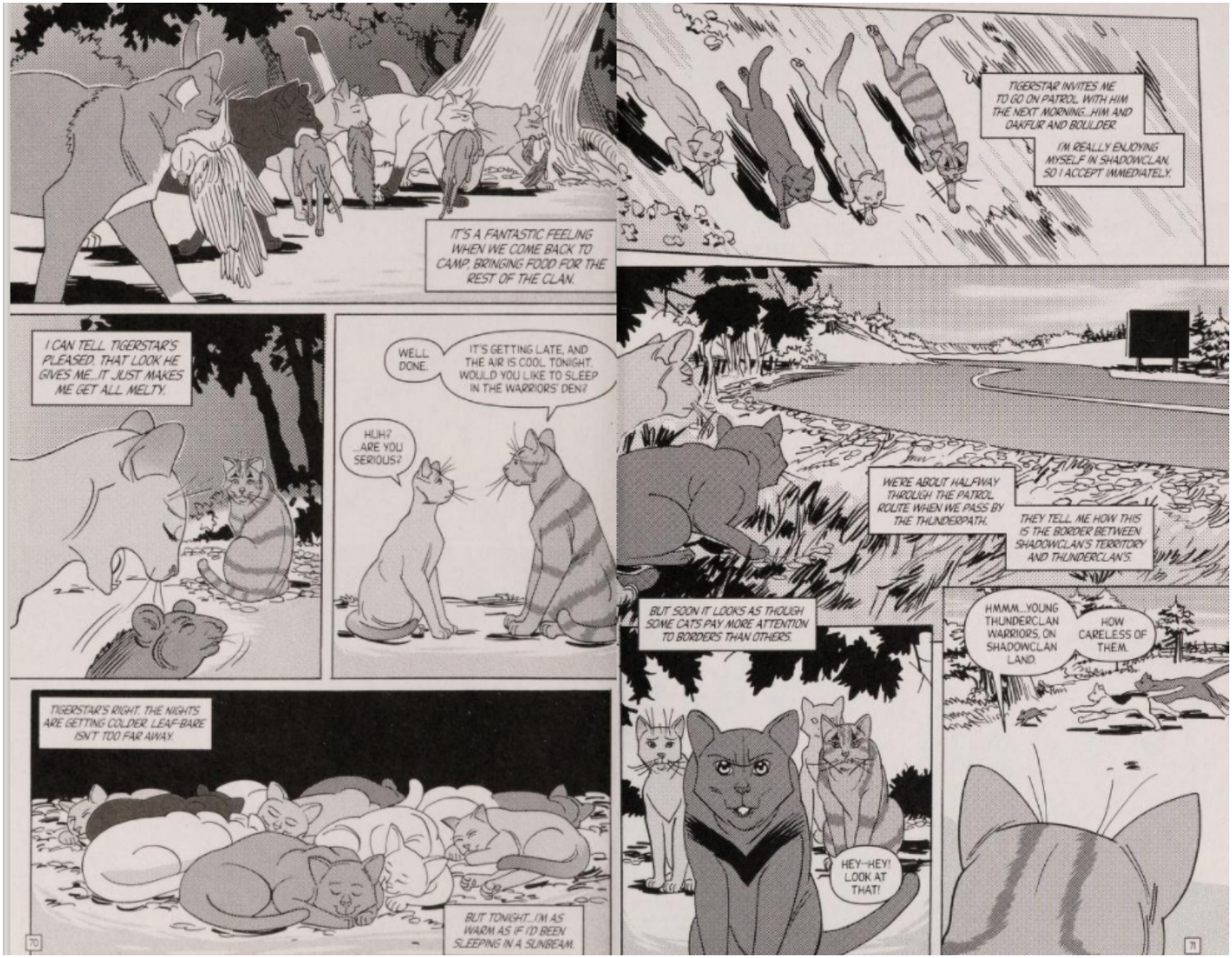
WELL, SO MUCH FOR THAT IDEA. WE HEAD BACK TO THE WOODS, AND I'M FEELING PRETTY GLUM...
...UNTIL I SPOT AN OLD FRIEND.
HI, SHINLKY.
WHA--SASHA!
OH, SASHA, IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU. I'VE BEEN SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
HOW HAVE YOU--YEEK!
HA! TYPICAL.
I'LL BE UP HERE.
I HAVE NO INTEREST IN KITTYPET TALK.
SASHA, ARE YOU CRAZY? WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH HIM?
THERE'S NO NEED TO BE SCARED. HIS NAME IS TIGERSTAR. HE SAVED MY LIFE.
OH, SASHA... YOU LOVE HIM, DON'T YOU? YOU LOVE THAT WILD CAT! I CAN TELL!
IT'S--I'M...I'M LONELY WITHOUT MY HOUSEFOLK.
BUT CATS LIKE US AND FOREST CATS DON'T MIX! EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT!
ENOUGH TALK. WE NEED TO GO.
SHINLKY DOESN'T UNDERSTAND. MY LIFE IS DIFFERENT NOW. I'M NOT A KITTYPET ANYMORE.
I DECIDE RIGHT THEN AND THERE: I'M GOING WITH TIGERSTAR TO THE FOREST, AND I'M NOT COMING BACK HERE.
EVER.

MY DEN SEEMED EMPTY LAST NIGHT WITHOUT TIGERSTAR IN IT... AND MY HEARTBEAT QUICKENS WHEN I SEE HIM.
I'M STARTING TO THINK SHADOWCLAN WAS RIGHT.
MAYBE I DO LOVE HIM.
ALL RIGHT, NOW IT'S MY TURN. COME WITH ME.
WHERE ARE WE GOING?
I WANT YOU TO SEE THE SHADOWCLAN CAMP.
I GET A TINGLE WHEN WE CROSS THE SHADOWCLAN BORDER.
SOON TIGERSTAR BEGINS POINTING OUT LANDMARKS. THE ROCKS WHERE A BRAVE WARRIOR FOUGHT HIS LAST BATTLE...
WON'T YOUR CLANMATES MIND?
I'M THEIR LEADER. THEY WON'T QUESTION ME.
OKAY. WHAT SHOULD I TELL THEM ABOUT MY, AH, MY LIFE AS A KITTYPET?
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT THAT. NOT TONIGHT, NOT EVER.
YOU ARE NOT A KITTYPET!
...THE TRAINING GROUND WHERE SHADOWCLAN WARRIORS LEARN TO HUNT AND TO FIGHT...
...AND FINALLY THE HIDDEN PATH THAT LEADS INTO THE CENTER OF THE CAMP.
I NEVER WOULD HAVE FOUND THIS ON MY OWN!

AND ALL OF A SUDDEN, HERE IT IS: SHADOWCLAN'S CAMP!
THE GROUND IS A LITTLE MUDDY UNDER MY PAWS. A LITTLE COOL.
THIS IS THE WARRIORS' DEN. IT'S A GREAT HONOR TO SLEEP HERE, AMONG THOSE CATS WHO DEFEND SHADOWCLAN WITH THEIR LIVES.
AND THIS IS ONE OF MY FINEST FIGHTERS: BOULDER.
PLEASED TO MEET YOU.
HI!
THIS IS THE DEN WHERE OUR MEDICINE CAT LIVES AND WORKS.
YOU'VE SHOWN ME YOUR DEN.
THIS IS MINE.
BUT YOU CAN POKE AROUND INSIDE IT LATER. THERE ARE OTHER SIGHTS TO SEE.
HIS NAME IS RUNNINGNOSE.
I'M CONCENTRATING HERE! UNLESS ONE OF YOU IS SICK, PLEASE COME BACK ANOTHER TIME!

AND HERE...THE MOST PRECIOUS PART OF SHADOWCLAN.
THIS IS WHERE ALL OF OUR YOUNG WARRIORS-TO-BE STAY.
EVENING, TALLPOPPY. I TRUST THE KITS ARE DOING WELL?
THEY'RE A PAWFUL, BUT ALL IN GOOD HEALTH.
THERE'S SO MUCH TO TAKE IN! MY HEAD IS ALREADY SPINNING...AND THEN:
EXCUSE ME... SASHA? WE HAVE PLENTY OF FRESH-KILL TONIGHT. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE IT WITH US?
ALL OF A SUDDEN, MY LONESOME LIFE AS A ROGUE SEEMS A LOT LESS APPEALING.
66
AND THE BIGGEST SURPRISE IS YET TO COME.
SASHA, WE'RE PUTTING TOGETHER A HUNTING PARTY.
CARE TO JOIN US?
HOW CAN I SAY NO?
THE PARTY'S MADE UP OF BLACKFOOT (THE CLAN DEPUTY), RUSSETFUR, JAGGEDTOOTH, ROWANPAW...AND ME.
I'M NERVOUS BEYOND BELIEF AT FIRST...
...BUT THEN RUSSETFUR TELLS ME SOMETHING THAT REALLY HELPS.
DON'T WORRY, SASHA. BLACKFOOT, JAGGEDTOOTH, AND I ALL USED TO BE ROGUES. JUST LIKE YOU.
I LIKE RUSSETFUR A LOT ALREADY.

SHE AND I KEEP TALKING AS THE PARTY SETS OUT.
WE'RE VERY LUCKY TO HAVE TIGERSTAR AS OUR LEADER. HE'S SO STRONG...HE TRULY KNOWS HOW TO KEEP US ALL TOGETHER.
PLUS HE'S UNDER SO MUCH PRESSURE RIGHT NOW. NOT LONG AGO, SHADOWCLAN WAS ALMOST DESTROYED...
...BUT TIGERSTAR IS PUTTING IT BACK TOGETHER. LIFTING IT UP TO THE WAY IT USED TO BE.
THE OTHER CLANS ARE SO POWER-HUNGRY... BUT IF ANYBODY CAN KEEP THEM AT BAY, IT'S TIGERSTAR.
I CAN'T HELP BUT BE IMPRESSED. THEY REALLY LOVE HIM!
WE STOP CHATTING ONCE THINGS GET DOWN TO BUSINESS.
OH, NO YOU DON'T!
GOTCHA!
WOW! I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYBODY CLIMB A TREE SO FAST! HOW'D YOU GET SO GOOD?
WELL, I'VE HAD A LOT OF PRACTICE--
I BREAK OFF MY WORDS. I WAS ABOUT TO SAY, "CLIMBING FENCES." TIGERSTAR WOULD'VE BEEN SO MAD AT ME!


IT'S A FANTASTIC FEELING WHEN WE COME BACK TO CAMP, BRINGING FOOD FOR THE REST OF THE CLAN.
I CAN TELL TIGERSTAR'S PLEASED. THAT LOOK HE GIVES ME...IT JUST MAKES ME GET ALL MELTY.
WELL DONE.
IT'S GETTING LATE, AND THE AIR IS COOL TONIGHT. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SLEEP IN THE WARRIORS' DEN?
HUH? ...ARE YOU SERIOUS?
TIGERSTAR'S RIGHT. THE NIGHTS ARE GETTING COLDER. LEAF-BARE ISN'T TOO FAR AWAY.
BUT TONIGHT...I'M AS WARM AS IF I'D BEEN SLEEPING IN A SUNBEAM.
70
TIGERSTAR INVITES ME TO GO ON PATROL WITH HIM THE NEXT MORNING...HIM AND OAKFUR AND BOULDER.
I'M REALLY ENJOYING MYSELF IN SHADOWCLAN, SO I ACCEPT IMMEDIATELY.
WE'RE ABOUT HALFWAY THROUGH THE PATROL ROUTE WHEN WE PASS BY THE THUNDERPATH.
THEY TELL ME HOW THIS IS THE BORDER BETWEEN SHADOWCLAN'S TERRITORY AND THUNDERCLAN'S.
BUT SOON IT LOOKS AS THOUGH SOME CATS PAY MORE ATTENTION TO BORDERS THAN OTHERS.
HMMM...YOUNG THUNDERCLAN WARRIORS, ON SHADOWCLAN LAND.
HOW CARELESS OF THEM.
HEY--HEY! LOOK AT THAT!
71

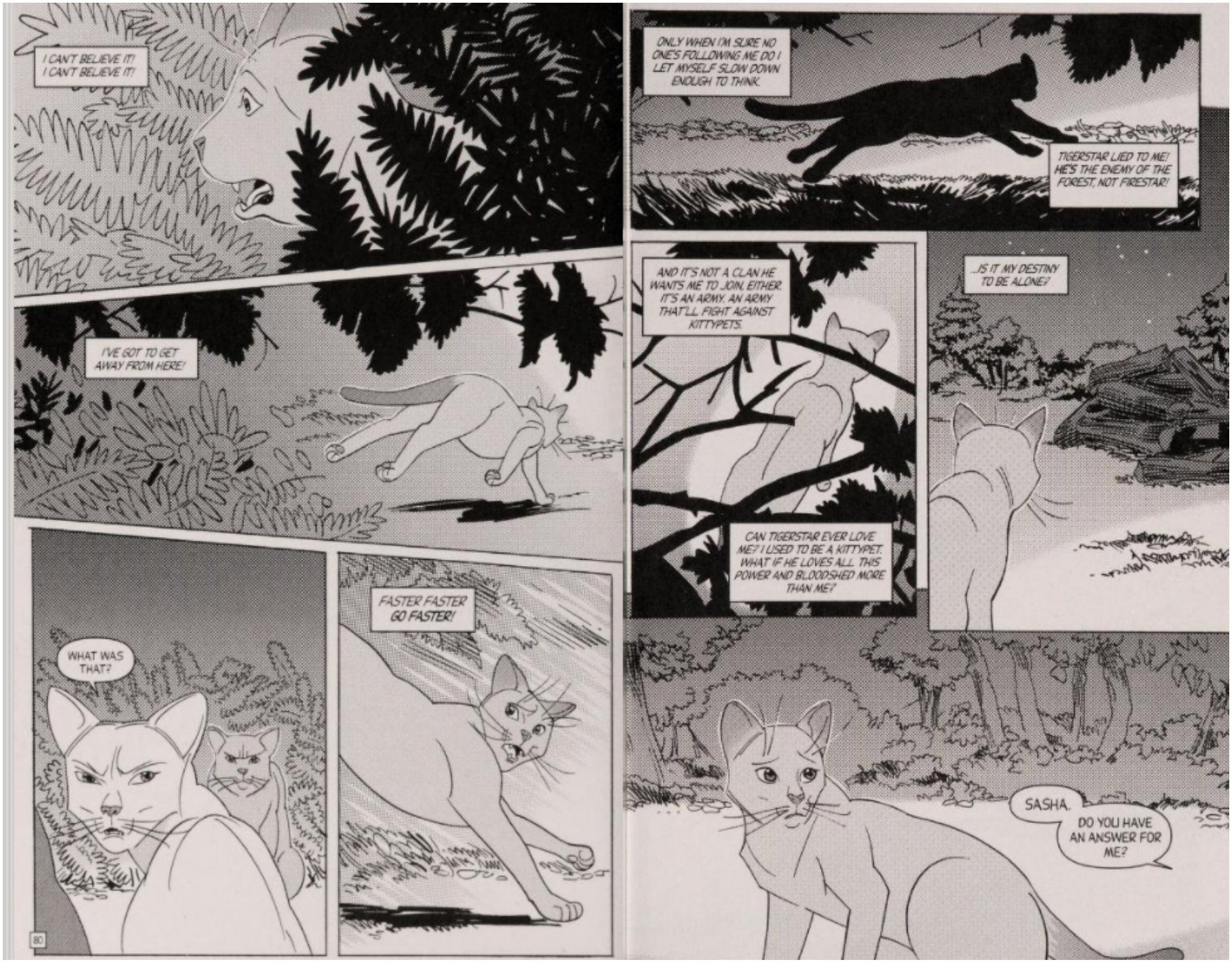
WE'VE GOT THE TWO ENEMY CATS SURROUNDED IN SECONDS. I DON'T THINK THEY EVEN KNOW WE'RE HERE.
UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE, OF COURSE.
TRAITOR!
YOU'LL PAY FOR WHAT YOU DID TO THUNDERCLAN!
THUNDERCLAN SPIES! HOW DARE YOU CROSS INTO OUR TERRITORY?
I LOVE THAT TONE TIGERSTAR GETS! SO STRONG, AND INTELLIGENT...
...AND FRIGHTENING, TOO, I GUESS.
TIGERSTAR?
WHY ARE THEY CALLING YOU A TRAITOR?
I KNEW I'D HAVE TO EXPLAIN THIS EVENTUALLY. I WAS ONCE DEPUTY OF THUNDERCLAN.
HE'S NOT GOING TO HURT THEM. SOMEHOW I CAN TELL...BUT THEY DON'T KNOW. I'M PROUD OF HOW MUCH CONTROL HE HAS.
I WAS DRIVEN OUT BY THEIR FORMER LEADER, BLUESTAR, WHO WAS WEAK AND ENVIOUS OF MY STRENGTH.
NOW THEY'RE LED BY FIRESTAR, AND THEY'RE A MENACE TO THE FOREST. THEY PAY NO REGARD TO THE WARRIOR CODE.
BETWEEN YOU AND ME, I'M WORRIED THAT FIRESTAR HAS AMBITIONS TO RULE THE ENTIRE FOREST.
DOESN'T THUNDERCLAN TEACH ITS WARRIORS TO RESPECT THE CLAN BOUNDARIES?
DOES FIRESTAR THINK THE FOREST BELONGS TO THUNDERCLAN?
GO! GET BACK TO YOUR OWN TERRITORY!
AND TELL FIRESTAR TO CURB HIS ARROGANCE. CONSIDER THIS A WARNING!
73

PART OF ME DOESN'T WANT TO GO...BUT I KNOW I SHOULD GET BACK TO MY OWN DEN FOR A WHILE.
THANK YOU FOR A LOVELY TIME, TIGERSTAR.
SASHA...WILL YOU JOIN US? JOIN THE CLAN?
THE NEXT DAY COMES AND GOES, AND I CAN'T GET THOUGHTS OF SHADOWCLAN OUT OF MY HEAD. IT COULD BE SO GOOD.
HAKK K-HAKK KAKK
SEE TIGERSTAR AS MUCH AS I WANTED. STAY SAFE. PROTECTED. MAYBE EVEN HAVE KITS THERE...!
YOU'D FIT IN WELL. YOU CAN HUNT. YOU'RE A GOOD FIGHTER.
PINE? IS THAT YOU?
HAKK WHAT'S IT TO YOU?
WELL...YOU DON'T SOUND SO GOOD. AND YOU'RE SO THIN. ARE YOU OKAY?
JOIN SHADOWCLAN...! THAT WOULD BE SO GREAT! BUT--BUT WHAT IF KEN CAME BACK?
CAN I THINK ABOUT IT?
I'LL COME TO YOUR DEN TOMORROW NIGHT. YOU CAN TELL ME THEN.
TOMORROW NIGHT...? WHY SO FAST?
OKAY...
NIGHTS'RE COLD NOW. NIGHTS GET COLD, Y'GET SICK. S'WHAT HAPPENS.
YOU TAKE CARE, NOW. I GOTTA GO TRY TO FIND SOMEPLACE WARMER FOR TONIGHT.
74

OKAY. THAT DOES IT. IF THAT'S WHAT I'VE GOT TO LOOK FORWARD TO AS A ROGUE...THEN I'LL DO IT.
I'LL JOIN SHADOWCLAN!
TIGERSTAR'S GOING TO BE SO HAPPY!
I CAN'T QUITE MAKE OUT WHAT THEY'RE SAYING...BUT THEY SOUND SO SERIOUS. I HOPE NOTHING'S WRONG.
I'M TRYING TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO MAKE MY PRESENCE KNOWN--BUT SOMETHING STOPS ME.
OH--I CAN HEAR VOICES UP AHEAD. DON'T WANT TO DISTURB ANYBODY. AFTER ALL, I'M NOT A CLAN MEMBER YET.
WAIT...IS THAT TIGERSTAR'S VOICE?
THEN I HEAR IT AGAIN...
...THE WORD "BLOOD."

THERE'S NO MORE TIME TO DELAY. WAR IS UPON THE CLANS, AND EVERY WARRIOR AND QUEEN MUST BE PREPARED TO FIGHT!
SCOURGE OF BLOODCLAN HAS AGREED TO UNITE WITH US. THE NEXT STEP IS TO TAKE OVER RIVERCLAN.
LEOPARDSTAR IS TOO WEAK TO STOP ME. SHE KNOWS I AM THE STRONGEST CAT IN THE WHOLE FOREST--
--AND SOON I WILL RULE ALL THE CLANS.
WHAT ABOUT FIRESTAR?
HA HA HA... THUNDERCLAN WON'T BE A PROBLEM.
I HAVE A PLAN TO LURE A PACK OF DOGS INTO THEIR CAMP.
THEN WE'LL BE RID OF THAT FILTHY KITTYPET FIRESTAR AND HIS CLAN OF KITTYPETS AND HALFBREEDS ONCE AND FOR ALL.

AND THEN TIGERSTAR...
...SHALL RULE...
...EVERYTHING.


I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
I'VE GOT TO GET AWAY FROM HERE!
WHAT WAS THAT?
FASTER FASTER GO FASTER!
ONLY WHEN I'M SURE NO ONE'S FOLLOWING ME DO I LET MYSELF SLOW DOWN ENOUGH TO THINK.
TIGERSTAR LIED TO ME! HE'S THE ENEMY OF THE FOREST, NOT FIRESTAR!
AND IT'S NOT A CLAN HE WANTS ME TO JOIN, EITHER. IT'S AN ARMY. AN ARMY THAT'LL FIGHT AGAINST KITTYPETS.
CAN TIGERSTAR EVER LOVE ME? I USED TO BE A KITTYPET. WHAT IF HE LOVES ALL THIS POWER AND BLOODSHED MORE THAN ME?
...IS IT MY DESTINY TO BE ALONE?
SASHA. DO YOU HAVE AN ANSWER FOR ME?
80

To Be Continued...